

Rev. Mr. John Dalton F.R.S.E.
with Gr. G. & Compliments
Considerations upon the Times:

*More especially with respect to the late and present
exorbitant Price of Provisions.*

1508/611.

A
SERMON

PREACHED

IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF COUNDE,

AND

CHAPEL OF CRESSAGE,

IN THE

COUNTY OF SALOP.

On the 5th and 12th of October, 1800.

BY THOMAS GOODINGE, L. L. D.

RECTOR OF THE SAID PARISH.

“Personal Application he makes none.” [p. 12.]

— Quod vitium procul abfore Chartis,
Atque animo prius, ut si quid promittere de me
Possum aliud, verè promitto. HOR. SERM. I. 101.

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1800.



THESE few pages are not published. The Author distributes some copies among his parishioners, and he circulates a few, solely because he conceives it to be his duty to bear the testimony they contain. He also takes leave solemnly to declare, that, with the exception of one note, they intend no allusion to the improper conduct of any individual. To the virtue and charities of several they do ; whose names, though in no exalted life, he should consider, if he were to mention them, as doing honor to his page. Of the remedies for the evils against which his discourse is principally directed, he forbears to say much, at least in present. He is nevertheless of opinion, that such as are effectual may be found. In smaller articles, agreements to refrain from purchase, if formed with due consideration, and adhered to with strict perseverance, would not fail to do much. In greater matters, they must consist partly of recurrence to the ancient laws and polity of the kingdom, with a few modifications, to adapt them to these times ; partly of pretty strong coercion of some very important abuses of more modern date, the correction of which he believes would be attended with no great difficulty, but would undoubtedly meet with some opposition ; and partly by certain regulations in the police

police of corporate towns, at least as far as is connected with this subject. But remedies of some kind or other must be applied; and those both speedy and efficient; or he has too much reason to fear that great as are the present evils, mischiefs infinitely greater are to be apprehended from their fast approaching consequences.



THE Author, in P. 6, may seem to refer to the mere natural powers of man, as sufficient to direct him, under all circumstances, to the Discovery of the Existence, and Providence of his Creator. His real sentiments are, and he wishes he had there explained them with more accuracy, as he has done upon other occasions, that at least all the religious knowledge, and very probably the far greater part even of the civil improvements of mankind, are to be referred to Revelation; and have been, "as all else that has been good in the world," in the words of the very able and pious writer he now quotes, "in their first roots merely derivative"—"resembling, perhaps with the closest analogy, "the growth of a vast tree; watered from on high with divine light, and spreading its branches indeed over the whole earth; but continually discovering its original trunk and root; without the support of which not one branch has ever grown to maturity."

KING's *Munimenta Antiqua*, Preface, P. 15, and P. 17.



A
S E R M O N, &c.

ACTS xiv. 17.

He left not himself without witness, in that he gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

ST. PAUL and his companion Barnabas had been preaching in Lystra, a considerable city of Lycaonia in the lesser Asia. St. Paul had also miraculously cured of inveterate lameness an inhabitant of that city, who had been a cripple from his infancy, and had never walked. The eloquence and wisdom of the Apostle's discourse, and the wonderful and beneficent action he had performed, produced the strongest influence upon the minds of this sanguine and precipitate people. Erroneous in their Opinions, they conceived the two Apostles to be themselves Deities, instead of messengers of the true God and his ever-blessed Son. Impetuous in their Actions, they would have offered them public worship; and had appointed, and were preparing solemn sacrifices to the Gods, whose condescension they imagined had vouchsafed to visit, to instruct, and confer benefits upon them. With

With most serious alarm, and anxious earnestness, the Apostles instantly interfered; hardly able, with every exertion, and by the weightiest remonstrances, to restrain this misguided zeal. "We are men as yourselves—our mission is to turn you from these delusions to the one true God, the Universal Father and Creator—the Giver of all Goodness, the Parent and Preserver of every created Being." "He, say the Apostles, in no time "left himself without witness"—manifesting in every age, and to every nation, His Power, His Goodness, and His Providence. Then follow the words for our immediate consideration,— "giving us rain," &c.

It is well worthy of remark, that the witness the Apostle declares with such solemnity that God hath always given of Himself, is by his continued operations of goodness and beneficence, and in particular by the support which all created Being derives from the bounty of his Providence. It is also observable, that St. Paul is express in insisting that at no time whatever, in no period of ignorance and darkness, however gross, hath God left himself without this witness—that though "in times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways"—unassisted by the knowledge of true religion—undirected by any revelation of his will—uninstructed by his ministers—yet that still the natural powers of the mind of man, the natural observations of his own reflection, could not but point out to him the great source, from whence
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he derived his existence, his faculties, and his preservation.

The inference is unavoidable. How inexcusable are we, in our days of improved knowledge—under the Christian Dispensation—in this Protestant Country—affuredly more happy in every civil and religious relation than any people upon earth, if we despise these great blessings—if we forget or neglect the obligations they impose upon us.

But upon the more universal Dispensations of the goodness of our God, whether in creation or preservation, or in the more inestimable work of Redemption, it may seem in present less necessary for us to dwell.

The present important crisis of this nation, and of the whole christian world—Reflection upon the past—the prospect of the future—the holy communion of the Body and Blood of the Son of God, of which we are now preparing to partake—all call aloud upon us for gratitude the most fervent—for reflections the most serious that can enter into the heart of man—such as cannot but affect the mind, even of the most heedless; but must strike deep indeed into the bosom of the thoughtful and religious.

The immediate circumstances of the Time call aloud upon your Minister for a plain and undisguised statement of certain facts.—The very statement will not fail to lead to consideration of the duty that results from them. In the very few observations which he may add, if he shall
speak

Speak with that frankness which not merely becomes him, but is the bounden duty of his station, let it be remembered, that his reflections are directed to things, not to persons—That when duties are enjoined, and sin reproof, all application of the injunction or reproof is for every individual to make in his own breast. If any hath done amiss, let him reform in silence—if his heart pronounce him blameless, let him “walk humbly with his God,” and beware that he depart not from his integrity.

In times more awful than Christian Europe hath yet experienced—when every year that hath gone by, when every passing hour is pregnant with events that proclaim aloud the finger of the Almighty—it had pleased His Providence, if not to punish us with the calamity of dearth and famine, at least to alarm and awaken us by more than one season more unfavourable than had been known for many years, and by what hath been most generally confessed to be a real diminution of the stock of our provisions. The same Visitations had, in a greater or lesser degree, been spread through other Countries; and, had the unproductiveness of the last season, and its unfavourable harvest been extended to the present, the consequences, enhanced as they were before, and as there is reason to fear they would now have been by the unfeeling barbarity of avarice, might have been dreadful, beyond what human foresight could look forward to, or human prudence could have prevented, or even palliated.

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Now it is most surely true, and cannot either be denied or concealed, that in both these years, the ever wakeful greediness of many added alarmingly to the pressure, whatever may have been the extent or magnitude of the real evil. By an enhancement of prices far above what the actual scarcity could warrant, or any reasonable or honourable profit of the grower or dealer justify—by collusive bargains upon terms merely nominal—by false and wicked misrepresentations of the produce and prospect of the harvests—by concealments from the knowledge of the country—by accumulation, and withholding from the markets the fair proportion which should always be brought forward for their due supply, and even by avoiding to sell in them at any rate—by injurious combinations—in very many instances by fraudulent adulteration, the difficulties of the public received much increase; nor can the censure upon all such practices be more severe than it is deserved. Whether the men who have done these things are of those “who make long prayers for a pretence;” or whether, “walking in the council of the ungodly, they sit more openly in the scorner’s chair;”—these, and every one of them, in proportion to the degree of their offence, are those that “grind the faces” of the people, are the true “devourers of the widow’s house,”—their condemnation before God and man both great and just.

Let not, however, this censure be either hasty or indiscriminate. The cultivator neither can,
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nor ought he to hurry the whole produce of his land into sudden consumption; lest, among other reasons, the profusion of the earlier months occasion aggravated scarcity in the latter. The dealer too is most useful, when, contenting himself with the true purpose of his calling, he supplies the deficiency of one district by the superfluity of another. Upon men, who engaging in no dangerous or avaricious speculation, have virtue and resolution so to regulate the transactions of their respective business, whose actions proceed upon principles of such utility as well as equity, no blame can possibly attach. Their industry is laudable; their moderate profits the fair reward of valuable service.

It is indeed devoutly to be hoped, that the instances in which the avarice of any have sought a sordid gain, by taking advantage of the public anxiety and necessity, have not been very numerous; especially if compared with those, who liberally and with true wisdom refused their countenance to the oppression; and disdained advantages not attainable but by the breach of such important duties to God and to their neighbour. Examples of such honourable men are not unknown, even to your Preacher; of men, who not merely under-selling to a few dependents, from ostentation or from terror, but with free and open hand, at equal, and comparatively moderate prices, have held forth to their neighbour, to every fair purchaser, and especially to the poor, that seasonable and regular supply which their necessities required. Of such men the esteem of
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those around them is their least praise. A satisfied and applauding conscience, and the approbation of Him who will suffer no good deed to pass unrewarded, will be their sure and lasting recompence: "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him; but blessings shall be on the head of him that SO selleth it."

But painful and ungrateful as is this subject, it cannot yet be dismissed. The present days have brought with them an evil utterly unknown to all that have passed before; such indeed, as, if the experience and the suffering of the whole nation did not prove it, would be even beyond credibility. After an harvest confessedly productive, and gathered in a season most unusually favourable, the prices not only of grain, but of every necessary of life have risen, and threaten to be continued at an exorbitance, of which under corresponding circumstances History can furnish no parallel. The mischief is doubly aggravated by the universal conviction, and even by the acknowledgment of those interested, that the grievance is artificial. It is not even affected to be concealed by the dealer in all these commodities, whether he be seller or buyer, that the prices demanded, and the prices offered, are both very far indeed above their level. Now be the fault of this where it may; whether in the dealer, who will offer an exorbitant price for purposes of private interest; or in the grower, who will exact, or even accept of terms beyond his fair and

and honest profits, † the whole is alike inexcusable; both parties are equally guilty of the offence. The practice is alike a crying sin before God, and a dreadful oppression upon Man. The duties of humanity, the injunctions of religion, and the direct commands of God, are all express. "He that oppresseth, REPROACHETH HIS MAKER." "If thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hands, ye shall not oppress." "Wo unto them that have made dishonest gain, and have greedily gained by extortion, by the iniquity of their traffick."—"Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord; shall I not be avenged?"

Your Minister hath already told you it is his bounden duty to urge these truths. Personal application he makes none. Let those who have done amiss, if there be any such who hear him,

† Facts are of more weight than reasonings: The reader may rely upon the following, which are only a small part of what might be adduced. He will draw his own conclusions. In a neighbouring county, a seditious paper was stuck up, inviting the people to assemble on the approaching market day. Some magistrates met upon the occasion, and all disturbance was prevented. They afterwards proceeded to the market, and enquired of a considerable farmer why prices were so high? "Gentlemen," his answer was, "I will tell you what has happened to me to-day. A buyer asked to see my sample: I shewed it; and he said, 'Why this is worth 18s. I will give it for what you have.' When this is the case, Gentlemen, can I be expected to sell for less?"—At Shrewsbury, a person early in the market bought oats at 6s. 6d. His consumption requiring more than his first purchase, he went again, and was witness to the following: "Let me look at your oats—these are worth 8s. 6d. I will give it; tie up your bags." To another and another he said and did the same, every article inferior to that purchased by my informant—Some millers and farmers frequenting Wellington market, at the instance of an able and respectable magistrate, signed an agreement not to buy or sell above a certain price. This agreement was printed and publicly advertised. The very next morning one of them, in Shrewsbury market, bid 16s. for wheat, which however was not sold to him, but to another for 15s. 6d. These things, and I could add largely to them, have all happened within the last fortnight.—Oct. 4, 1800. "GOD IS NOT MOCKED."

do so no more. Let those, whose better principles have resisted the temptation, continue to do honor to themselves, and service to their country, by their laudable perseverance. They will not fail of their reward.

But of this gloomy scene, and most ungrateful subject enough, and perhaps more than enough. Sufficient unto these days of trial, but of mercy, hath been and is their evil. The gracious goodness of our God hath restored to us the years of plenty. May every abuse, to which either the scarcity which is past, or this return of abundance hath given rise, be repressed and remedied, by the silent voice of conscience, by the united, but legal and peaceable efforts of the people, by the operation of good and wholesome laws! May our grateful hearts never forget to whom we owe our late propitious harvest, and every other blessing—never overlooking the duties they require of us, acknowledging the kindness of all-bounteous Providence, giving “Glory to God in the highest,” and exercising a zealous, a practical and a persevering “good-will towards men!” Pray we to the all-gracious Father, in whom we have our life, and the continuance of that life, with all its comforts, and all its blessings, that He will no more send among us “his great army, the locust, the worm, and the caterpillar;” that He will grant “our garners to be full and plenteous with all manner of store;” “that our sheep may bring forth thousands;” “our oxen be strong to labour;” “that there be

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no decay, no complaining in our streets ;” “ that He will give us grace so to use these His mercies, as neither to waste them in riotous profusion, nor hoard them with designing avarice ; but that we may employ them with chearfulness and moderation “ to the relief of our necessities,” and for the support of the “ poor that crieth.”

May our God also, in his good and appointed time, add to his other gracious gifts the blessing of “ Peace on earth.” May the confusion, the anarchy, the tyranny, the misery, the persecution, the devastation, which have so widely spread around us, never be known to these dominions but by report, never be read but in the page of foreign history ! May that God be our protection, who hath hitherto “ held fast “ the bars of our gates—hath kept peace within “ our borders, and even now hath filled us with “ the flour of wheat.”

To urge every reflection which the importance of our subject would press upon us is impossible ; but there is one so obvious, and so weighty—that here in the Church of Christ—with his sacramental table spread before us—it cannot be that we omit—that for this, and every other mercy, we render thanks “ to God and the Father, **THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.**” By Him all things were made—He is the life and light of man : We are His “ peculiar people ; “ bought with the price of His most precious “ blood.” He is our Intercessor with the Father ;
our

our Redeemer; and is to be our final Judge. Be we then as men "that have known the ways of the Lord, and the judgments of our God."—Through Him, "the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world," let us prostrate ourselves in deep humiliation before the eternal throne—"bewailing our manifold offences"—acknowledging that it is of His goodness that we are not victims of famine and the sword—saying in our hearts, and with our tongues, "It is the Lord that giveth rain, and maketh the sun to shine—" that openeth His hand, and filleth all things—" that reserveth to us the appointed weeks of "harvest."

Above all, let us beware that we imitate not the subsequent conduct of these men of Lystra in our text. No sooner had the first fond impulse of their foolish eagerness subsided, than they scorned the instruction—despised the benefits—forgot the miracle—and attempted the destruction of the Apostle. "There came certain Jews, and persuaded the people, who stoned Paul, and drew him out of the City, supposing he had been dead." Let not us be in the like manner forgetful of the manifold mercies that we have received—but with every bounden sentiment of piety, awe, and adoration, let the "Praises of God be ever in our mouths;" not merely for the short hours we are here assembled, but uniformly, and through the whole period of our lives. And would to God that the dreadful

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dreadful necessity of the times did not call upon us to add the remaining words of the Psalmist, "and a two-edged sword in our hands, to be delivered from the heathen."

Yet, though there should not be found among us the "ten righteous," for whose sake the avenging angel would spare an offending nation; yet, not for our merit, but in thy mercy, "save and deliver us, we beseech Thee, O God, from the hands of our enemies." For the past years wherein thy right hand hath upholden us—for the gracious protection thou hast hitherto in thy loving-kindness vouchsafed to our Sovereign, his kingdoms, and our church, we bow down to thee with the full heart of humblest gratitude. "Not unto us, O Lord, but to thy name give we the glory, for thy mercies sake." As members of our now united Empire, as Britons, as loyal to our King, and faithful to our Country; as subjects of the mildest, and best regulated Government upon this Earth; as enjoying blessings unspeakable, and prosperity almost without example; thankful for thy good gifts, and meekly bending beneath thy chastisements, conclude we in the language of the Psalmist,—

"Let us pray for the Peace of our Jerusalem; may they prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy dwellings. For our brethren and companions sake; yea, because of the house of the Lord our God, we will wish thee prosperity; we will seek to do thee good."

[T. WOOD, PRINTER, SALOP.]

